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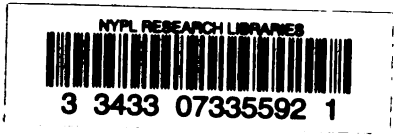
MASTER AND MAN

TOLSTOI

SLAVIC AND BALTIC DIVISION



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Elizabeth H. Fisher
25 July, 1895.

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MASTER AND MAN

By COUNT LEO TOLSTOI

TRANSLATED BY
HETTIE E. MILLER

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MASTER AND MAN.

CHAPTER I.

It was about the year 1870, the day after the *fete* of St. Nicholas.* The parish celebrated this day, and Vassili Andréitch Brekhounov, a merchant of the second guild, could not leave home; he was obliged to attend service—for he was church warden—and besides, he had relatives and acquaintances to receive and entertain. The last guests had departed, and Vassili Andréitch immediately prepared to drive to a neighboring land-owner, in order to obtain from him a small grove for which he had been bargaining a long time. Vassili Andréitch made all the haste possible,

*That is, from 6th to 18th of December.

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fearing that merchants from the town might snatch out of his grasp this desirable purchase. The young land-owner asked ten thousand rubles for the grove, for the simple reason that Brekhounov had offered him seven thousand. Seven thousand, however, was but one-third of the actual value of the property. Vassili Andréitch might, perhaps, have got a still lower figure, as the grove in its circuit lay between him and the village, and the agreement had been made by the merchants of the circuit, that one merchant should not bid higher than the one in whose district the land lay. But Brekhounov had heard that the government buyers intended coming thither to buy the wood at Garjatschkino; therefore he resolved to drive over at once and to close the bargain with the owner of the property. As soon as the guests had gone, he took from a chest seven hundred rubles, added to this amount two thousand three hundred rubles in his possession belong-

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ing to the church, in order that he might have three thousand rubles, counted them carefully, put them in his pocket and prepared for his journey.

Nikita, the only one of all Brekhounov's servants who was not intoxicated, came out to put the horses to. Nikita was sober on this day, although he had been a drunkard, but since the day before Lent, when he had drunk up his leather boots and his *poddjowka*, (a sleeveless cloak), he had vowed never to drink again and had kept his vow for two months in the face of the temptation of seeing the quantity of brandy which was consumed during the first two days of the *fete*.

Nikita was a *moujik* of fifty, a native of the neighboring village, not his own master, who, as they said, had spent the greater part of his life, not at home, but in the service of others. Everywhere he was prized for his love of work, skillfulness, strength, and above all—for his goodness and his happy disposi-

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tion; but he did not remain in any position long, for twice a year, sometimes oftener, he yielded to his appetite for liquor, and at such times he not only drank up everything, but he became violent and quarrelsome. Vassili Andréitch had sent him away several times, but had taken him back, for he appreciated his honesty, his kindness to animals, and above all, his willingness. Vassili Andrèitch paid Nikita only forty rubles, though such a servant usually received eighty—and then he paid him his wages on account, in small sums and not even in cash, but in wares for which he charged high, and which he took from his shop.

Nikita's wife, Marfa, once a handsome, prudent woman, kept house with her half grown son and two daughters; she did not want her husband, Nikita, at home, for in the first place she had lived for about twenty years with a cooper, a *moujik* from a distant village, and who had formerly lodged with

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her, and in the second place she, who ruled her husband when sober, was very much afraid of him when intoxicated. Once Nikita, probably under the influence of liquor, in order to avenge himself upon his wife for holding him in subjection when he was sober, had broken open his wife's chest, taken out her most costly dresses and cut them into tiny pieces.

His wages were paid by his master to his wife, without any objection on the part of Nikita. At this time, two days before the *fete*, Marfa presented herself at Brekhounov's, bought flour, tea, sugar and a bottle of brandy, amounting in all to three rubles, received five rubles in cash and thanked the master as if for an especial favor, while at least twenty rubles more were owing Nikita.

"We have not made any especial conditions," said Vassili Andréitch. "If you require anything—take it. You are working it out. It is not with me as it is with the

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others who let you wait until accounts are made out and fines deducted. We deal honestly. You serve me, and I will not desert you. If you are in need, I will help you out." In speaking thus, Vassili Andréi.ch really believed that he was Nikita's benefactor, he talked so convincingly, and every one, from Nikita down, agreed with him.

"Yes, I understand, Vassili Andréitch; I believe I serve you with as much pleasure as if you were my own father; I understand," replied Nikita, who knew very well that Vassili Andréitch was cheating him, and who felt at the same time that it would be useless to attempt to get a reckoning, and that it would be better to remain here, as long as no other position offered itself, and to take what was given him.

Now, having received his master's order to put the harness to, Nikita, as usual, happy and contented, turned his steps towards the barn, took the heavy harness from the hook,

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and jingling the bit, approached the stall in which stood the horse which was to be harnessed.

"Are you lonesome, dear friend?" asked Nikita in response to the low neigh of delight with which he was greeted by the slender, medium sized bay, with the white chanfrin and the low crupper. "Here, here, be patient; come, I will give you a drink first, stupid fellow," said he to his horse, as if it had been a human being and understood his language. He rubbed the animal's back with his gown, put the harness over the beautiful head, arranged his ears and mane, and throwing back the halter, led him to the spring. The bay walked carefully out of the stall, which was full of manure, and began to play with Nikita, by kicking out his hind legs, as if he wanted to strike Nikita, who was trotting beside him.

"Do not be so wild, you wight!" said Nikita, who probably knew that the horse

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was so careful in his play that he touched Nikita's furs, but did not hurt him. Nikita loved the animal's playfulness.

When the horse had drunk of the cold water, he stood still for a moment, snorted and shook the drops of water from his large mouth back into the trough.

"You do not want any more? Very well then, you must not ask for more," said Nikita, gravely explaining to the horse his way of acting; he returned to the barn with the bay, which still struck out spiritedly with his hind legs.

All the other servants were away; there was no one around but a stranger, the cook's husband, who had come on a visit for the holidays.

"Go and ask, dear man," said Nikita to him, "which sleigh I am to harness to, the large or the small one?"

The cook's husband went into the house and soon returned with the order to harness

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to the smaller one. Meanwhile Nikita had put on the horse-collar, adjusted the pad, and, in one hand the light-camber, with the other leading the horse, he approached the sleigh standing in the barn. "The little one, all right," said he, and putting the intelligent beast, who all the time pretended to want to bite the man, into the thills, be began with the help of the cook's husband to harness to.

When all was in readiness and only the reins remained to be tied, Nikita sent the cook's husband into the barn for straw and into the shed for the grain bag.

"Now all is ready. Here, be quick!" said Nikita, as he arranged the straw in the sleigh. "Now we will put the coarse cloth and the sack over it. So, now it will be comfortable," said he, doing as he had said.

"I thank you, dear man," said Nikita to the cook's husband; "when two work it always goes quicker." He arranged the reins, mounted the ladder-beam and drove the

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horse through the frozen manure of the courtyard towards the gate.

"Uncle Nikita, little Uncle!" called after him a boy of seven, hurrying out of the hall and rattling the latch of the door. The boy wore a black pelisse, white felt boots and a warm cap. "Take me with you!" he besought in his shrill voice, buttoning his fur coat as he walked along.

"Well, well, come, Paul," said Nikita, drawing up; taking up the master's son, who beamed with delight, and driving out into the street.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon. It was very cold without—the thermometer registered 12 degrees—the sky was overcast and the wind blew. In the court the wind was not noticeable, but in the street it blew a gale, carrying with it the snow from the roof of a neighboring shed and ending in quite a whirlwind at the corner by the bathhouse. Scarcely had Nikita driven out into

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the street and drawn up at the door of the house, when Vassili Andréitch, a cigarette between his lips, enveloped in a heavy sheepskin coat, came out of the hall to the door, where the snow creaked beneath his felt boots, and there he paused to put back from his rosy-cheeked, smoothly shaved face the collar of his fur coat.

"Look at that boy, he is the first everywhere!" said he, espying his son in the sleigh and showing his white teeth as he spoke. Vassili Andréitch was somewhat animated by the wine which he had drunk with his guests and was therefore still more contented with everything that belonged to him, and with everything he did. His pale and thin wife, wrapped in a woolen shawl, leaving only her eyes uncovered, accompanied her husband to the hall.

"You should take Nikita with you, really," said she timidly, stepping to the door.

Vassili Andréitch made no reply; he simply spat with a scornful air.

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"You have money with you," she continued in the same tearful tone. "A storm is threatening too. Really!"

"Do I not know the way myself, that I need a guide?" asked Vassili Andréitch, unnaturally compressing his lips, as was his custom when he talked with buyers and sellers, apparently taking great pleasure in his own words.

"But please, take him along. I pray you, for God's sake," repeated his wife.

"She sticks like a burr . . . Where shall I stuff you?"

"I am ready, Vassili Andréitch," said Nikita gaily. "Providing that, in my absence, they do not forget to feed the horses," he added, turning to his mistress.

"I will see to that, Nikita, I will commission Lemen to do it," said she.

"Then, shall I go, Vassili Andréitch?" asked Nikita, awaiting a reply.

"We will give in to the old lady. But, if

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you want to go with me, you must put on something warmer," said Vassili Andréitch, looking with a smile at Nikita's patched and dirty pelisse.

"Here, my friend, come, hold the horse!" called Nikita in the direction of the court-yard, to the cook's husband.

"I will hold him!" said the boy, taking his red, frozen hands out of his pockets and reaching for the cold reins.

"Be quick, do you hear!" called Vassili Andréitch after Nikita.

"I will be back in a trice, little father Vassili Andréitch," said Nikita, running towards the court and from there to the servants' quarter.

"Arina, hand me my dressing-gown out of the stove; I am going to drive with the master!" said Nikita, entering the room and taking his hat from the nail.

The cook, who had taken a nap that afternoon and was now preparing the samovar for

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her husband, received Nikita pleasantly, and, infected by his hurried manner, she fetched from the stove the old cloth kaftan which had been drying there and shook it.

"You can now enjoy your husband's society," said Nikita to the cook, for it was his custom when alone with any one to say something out of politeness. He put on his girdle, drew in his waist as tightly as possible and wrapped himself in the pelisse.

"Now," said he, touching his girdle and turning to the cook. "Now, my girdle, you will not open now!" He moved his shoulders several times to ascertain if he could stir about freely, drew on the kaftan, stretched himself again in order to have his arms free, swung them back and forth as if to warm himself, and took down his mittens from the shelf. "Now, it is all right."

"You should have your feet wrapped up warmer, Nikita Steponytsch," said the cook. "Your boots are very poor."

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Nikita seemed to be considering. "Yes, I should have done so, but this will do; it is not far!" And he ran across the courtyard.

"Will you not be cold, Nikita?" asked his mistress, when Nikita reached the sleigh.

"Oh no, it is quite warm," replied Nikita, arranging the straw in the sleigh, in order that he might cover his feet with it, and as he did this, hiding beneath the straw the whip which a good horse did not need.

Vassili Andréitch, who was wrapped in two fur pelisses, was already seated in the sleigh, which he almost filled, he took up the reins and away they went. Nikita leapt in while the sleigh was in motion, made himself comfortable and stretched out his limbs.

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CHAPTER II.

THE brave bay drew the sleigh, and trotted over the frozen village road.

"What are you doing here? Give me the whip, Nikita," exclaimed Vassili Andréitch, apparently amused at his son, who was making himself comfortable on the runners. "Wait, you rascal! Go to your mother!"

The boy jumped down. The bay slackened his pace, the next moment to trot again.

The village in which was the house of Vassili Andréitch, consisted of six houses. As soon as they had passed the last courtyard, where lived the blacksmith, they felt at once that the wind was much higher than they had thought it to be. The road could not be seen. The tracks made by the runners had been eradicated by the wind immediately,

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and the road was only distinguished from other parts on account of its being higher. A mist lay over the entire road, and it was impossible to define the line of the horizon. The forest of Téliatino, which could usually be seen, looked like a gloomy, black spot through the snowy mist. The wind blew from the west, stubbornly blowing the horse's mane in one direction; it even blew its knotted tail aside and flapped Nikita's long collar on his kaftan in his face and nose.

"The horse cannot trot well to-day; too much snow," said Vassili Andréitch, who was proud of his fine steed. "I drove to Paschutino once with him, and he got me there in a half-hour."

"How?"

"To Paschutino, I say; he got me there in a half-hour!"

"Ah yes, that is a good horse!" said Nikita. They were silent. Yet Vassili Andréitch was inclined to converse.

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"You have probably now forbidden your wife to give the cooper anything to drink?" said Vassili Andréitch, evidently believing that Nikita must feel flattered at being able to talk with such an important and clever person as himself, and so satisfied with his joke that it did not occur to him that his words might be unpleasant to Nikita.

Nikita did not hear his master's words, the wind bore them away.

Vassili Andréitch repeated his jest in a louder, more distinct tone.

"God bless them, Vassili Andréitch, I do not interfere in such matters. I only ask that she treat my boy well, otherwise I have no interest in her!"

"That is right," said Vassili Andréitch. "And shall you buy a horse for yourself this spring?" he opened another topic of conversation.

"I shall have to,probably," replied Nikita, pushing back the collar of his kaftan and leaning towards his master.

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This time the conversation interested him, and he wanted to hear all.

"The boy is growing up, and we shall have to work ourselves; hitherto we have had to hire laborers," said he.

"I have a horse, take it. I will sell it cheap," cried Vassili Andréitch, with animation, for he was here in his element, his favorite business, horse-dealing.

"If you will give me about fifteen rubles, I will buy one at the horse market," said Nikita, who knew that the horse which Vassili Andréitch offered him was not worth more than seven rubles, and that Vassili Andréitch would estimate it at five and twenty rubles; then he would receive no wages from him for six months.

"The horse is an excellent one; I speak in your interest, upon my honor! Brekhounov never tries to cheat any one. I rather prefer to give of my goods than to do like others. Upon my honor!" he said with that intonation

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employed by him towards his customers when he wanted to persuade them. "The horse is excellent!"

"Certainly!" said Nikita with a sigh, and as he was now fully convinced that it was useless to listen any longer, he turned the collar of his coat so that it covered his ears and face.

They rode on for half an hour in silence. The wind blew upon Nikita's sides and arms through the places where the fur had separated.

He shivered with the cold, blew his warm breath into his collar which covered his mouth, and it seemed to him as if his breath warmed him.

"What do you think, shall we drive by way of Karamyschewo or straight along?" asked Vassili Andréitch.

By way of Karamyschewo the road was more frequented and was marked on both sides by two rows of posts, but the distance

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was greater. By taking the direct route they would arrive quicker; but the road was used less, and either there were no posts or they were poor and hidden by the snow.

Nikita considered awhile.

"By way of Karamyschewo; it is farther, to be sure, but the road is better," said he.

"But if we take the direct route, we have only to cross the ravine safely, then all will be well," said Vassili Andréitch, who preferred taking this road.

"As you like," said Nikita, again putting up his collar. So Vassili Andréitch took the way he preferred, and after having driven half a *verst*, they came to a large oak tree, the dried leaves of which trembled in the wind; here he turned to the left.

The wind was now in their faces, and it began to snow. Vassili Andréitch took the reins, puffed out his cheeks and whistled through his mustache.

Nikita slept.

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They drove on for ten minutes thus in silence. Suddenly Vassili Andréitch said something.

"How?" asked Nikita, opening his eyes.

Vassili Andréitch made no reply, but leaned forward and looked about him. The horse was covered with frost and was walking.

"How?" repeated Nikita.

"How? How?" mimickedVassili Andréitch angrily. "The posts are no longer visible! We have probably lost our way."

"Then wait, I will go and find it," said Nikita. Springing lightly from the sleigh, he took the whip from under the straw, went towards the left and then again toward the direction in which he had been seated.

The snow, this year, was not so deep as to render the roads impassable; yet Nikita occasionally sunk up to his knees in the snow, so that his boots were filled with it. Nikita went on, sounding the ground with his feet and with the whip, but no road was to be found.

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"Well, what is it?" asked Vassili Andréitch, when Nikita again returned to the sleigh.

"There is no road on this side. Now I am going to the other."

"There lies something black, go and see what it is!" said Vassili Andréitch. Nikita approached the spot designated. It was earth which the wind had blown from uncovered spots and which had discolored the snow. After having examined the right side, Nikita returned, shook off the snow with which he was covered, emptied it likewise out of his boots and reëntered the sleigh. "To the right!" he said with decision. "I have had the wind on my left side, and now it is blowing directly in my face. To the right!" he added.

Vassili Andréitch obeyed and turned toward the right. But still they saw no road. They drove along thus for some time. The wind did not subside and the snow continued to fall. "Well, we have surely lost our way,

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Vassili Andréitch," suddenly said Nikita with a sort of satisfaction . . . "What is that?" he added, pointing to a heap of black potato vines, which peeped up from the snow.

Vassili Andréitch pulled up his horse, which was covered with sweat. "Well, what?" he asked.

"What? We are on the field of Zahkarovka! That is where we are!"

"You are lying," said Vassili Andréitch, who now spoke in the tone of a simple *moujik*, and not at all as he did at home.

"I am not lying, Vassili Andréitch, I am speaking the truth," said Nikita. "Do you not hear by the sound of the sleigh that we are driving over a potato-field; there are a lot of potato tops thrown there. This is the field of the manufactory of Zakharovka."

"Then we have lost our way!" exclaimed Vassili Andréitch. "What are we to do?"

"We will drive straight along; we will

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come out somewhere," said Nikita. "If we do not reach Zakharovka, we shall at least come to the farm."

Vassili Andréitch followed this advice and drove on. They went on for some time thus. Now they drove over broad fields upon which the heaps of snow and the furrows were covered with dirt. Now they came to the winter and autumn seeds, now they drove through the deep white snow which stretched spotless before them. The snow fell from above and rose in a whirl from below. Now it seemed as if they were descending a hill, now as if they were ascending, but now, too, as if they were standing still, while the field of snow rushed past them. Both were silent. The horse seemed exhausted, the sweat upon his skin had frozen, and he walked slowly on. Suddenly he stumbled and fell into a slough.

Vassili Andréitch wanted to hold him back, but Nikita called out: "Don't hold him! We

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are there, we shall have to get out of the slough. Ha, my dear, ha, ha! my boy!" cried he in an encouraging voice to the horse, leaping out of the sleigh and jumping into the quagmire. The horse pulled and immediately came out upon a frozen part. It was a moat which had been dug.

"Where are we?" asked Vassili Andréitch.

"We shall soon find out!" replied Nikita. "We will come out somewhere."

"This must be the forest of Gorjatschkino," said Vassili Andréitch, pointing to something black which they could see through the snow.

"When we reach it, we shall see what forest it is," said Nikita. He saw that the wind was blowing from that dark spot the dry, long leaves of the osier, and by this he knew that it was no forest, but a dwelling house; still he would not say so. And, indeed, scarcely were they thirty yards from the slough than they saw trees before them and heard a melancholy sound mingled with

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the raging of the wind. Nikita was right. This was no forest, but a row of tall osiers with a few leaves. The osiers had probably been planted by the slough. On reaching the osiers, which sighed sadly in the breeze, the horse stood suddenly upon the road, his limbs freed from the deep snow.

"Now we are there," said Nikita, "but we know not where."

The horse trotted over the snow-covered road without hesitation, and after having gone scarcely a hundred paces they saw the outlines of a grange. A little farther on, the road turned in the face of the wind and they drove into a snow pile. But before them they could see a lane between two houses, so that, it seemed, this pile of snow had drifted thither and they had to go through it. Indeed, after having passed it they reached a street. Near the first house, in a courtyard, the wind was blowing some frozen linen hanging upon a line; shirts, a red one, a white one; drawers,

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under-drawers and a woman's petticoat. Especially did the white shirt, with its sleeves, blow hither and thither.

"Look, this woman here is either lazy, or she is lying at the point of death; she has left her washing hanging out on a holiday," said Nikita, glancing at the flying shirts.

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CHAPTER III.

At the entrance to the street it was still windy and the road was snowy, but in the heart of the village it was quiet, warm and gay. In one courtyard a dog was barking, in another a woman, putting over her head a man's coat without sleeves, ran up and paused on the threshold of the *izba* to stare at the travelers. From the village could be heard the voices of young girls, singing. The wind, snow and frost seemed to be less in the village.

"This is surely Grischkino," said Vassili Andréitch.

"Yes," replied Nikita.

And indeed, it was Grischkino.

The travelers had therefore strayed to the left of the road, about eight *versts* out of their

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course, but without, however, going very much out of the way of the aim of their journey. From Gorjatschkino to Grischkino it was but a distance of five *versts*.

In the village they met a tall man who was walking in the middle of the street.

"Who goes there?" cried this man, stopping the horse; but as soon as he recognized Vassili Andréitch, he approached the sleigh and seated himself upon the ladder-beam.

It was Moujik Issaï, famous through the district as the greatest horse-thief in the country, and whom Vassili Andréitch knew well.

"Ah, Vassili Andréitch, whither are you going?" said Issaï, and his breath, heavy with the fumes of whisky, penetrated Nikita's nostrils.

"We were going to Gorjatschkino."

"Is that so, and so you came here? You should have gone by way of Malakhovo."

"Yes, we should have, but we could not, you see," said Vassili Andréitch, stoppin the horse.

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"This is a fine horse," said Issaï, examining Moukhorty, and, with a gesture which was peculiar to him, he tightened the loosened knot of the horse's tail. "You will spend the night here?"

"No, brother, we are obliged to go farther."

"Is that so? And who is here? Ah! Nikita Steponytsch!"

"Who else, then?" replied Nikita. "You must tell us, my friend, the way, that we may not get lost again."

"And how could you lose yourselves? Turn and drive straight up this street—and keep on to the right. Then, on leaving the village, turn to the left. At the turning are some bushes, opposite the bushes is a large oaken post—that is the right way."

Vassili Andréitch turned and drove through the village.

"You should have stayed over night!" called Issaï after them. But Vassili Andréitch

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made no reply. Five *versts* of straight road, two of which went through the forest, seemed a trifle to him, so much the more as the wind had apparently subsided and the snow had ceased falling.

They drove back the same way they had come—the wind had already torn loose the white shirt, it hung only by one frozen sleeve. The branches rustled terribly. Then they were in the open field. The snowstorm, instead of having abated, seemed on the contrary to have redoubled. The road had disappeared altogether, and that they did not lose their way entirely was owing to the posts, though they too were difficult to see, for the wind blew directly in their faces.

Vassili Andréitch, his eyes half closed, leaned forward to examine the posts, but more often he trusted to his horse. Indeed, the animal did not hesitate, but walked now to the right, now to the left, according to the windings of the road which he felt beneath

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his feet. Thus, notwithstanding the fact that the snow fell more heavily and the wind blew more violently, the posts were to be seen now upon the left, now upon the right side.

They had driven along ten minutes, when, suddenly, just in front of the horse, appeared a black spot which moved, as behind a net, in the oblique lines of the falling snow. It was a sleigh which preceded them, going in the same direction. The bay overtook it and struck his legs against the seat of the sleigh in front.

"Pass before us!" called the people in the sleigh. Vassili Andréitch turned. In the sleigh sat three *moujiks* and a woman. They were probably guests returning from the *fete*. One of the *moujiks* struck the horse with a stick. The other two waved their hands and called out something. The woman, muffled up, leaned back in the sleigh.

"Whence come ye?" cried Vassili Andréitch.

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"From A—a—a," was all that could be heard.

"Whence?"

"From A—a—a," replied one of the *moujiks*, screaming with all his might, and still they could not hear.

"Forward! Do not slacken!"

"They are probably coming from the *fete!*"

"Forward, forward! Drive on, Lemen! Drive around them! Drive!"

The sleighs were side by side, then that containing the *moujiks* was left behind.

The stout little horse panted beneath the low camber and could scarcely drag it's short legs through the deep snow. For several seconds its nose was near Nikita's shoulder, then it began to lose ground.

"What wine *will* do!" said Nikita. "They have driven the horse to death! Barbarians!"

For a few moments the panting of the exhausted animal was heard, together with the screams of the tipsy *moujiks*, then all was

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still, except for the whistling of the wind and the faint clatter of hoofs.

This meeting reanimated and encouraged Vassili Andréitch, and this time without seeking the posts, he whipped up his horse, trusting himself to him. Nikita having nothing to do, was asleep. Suddenly the horse stopped and Nikita almost fell out of the sleigh.

"I believe we have lost the way again," said Vassili Andréitch.

"Why so?"

"Because the posts are not to be seen again. I think we are lost."

"Then we will have to look for the route again, if we are lost," said Nikita, simply, alighting from the sleigh and again sounding the snow. He hunted a long time, appearing and disappearing; at length he returned.

"There is no road here; it may be further on," said he, seating himself in the sleigh.

It was beginning to grow dark, the snowstorm did not increase, nor did it diminish.

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"If we could now at least hear the other *moujiks*," said Vassili Andréitch.

"Oh, we are too far from them, or else it is they who are lost," said Nikita.

"Whither now?" asked Vassili Andréitch.

"We shall have to let the horse take its own course; he will lead us back to the road," said Nikita. "Give me the lines."

Vassili complied so much the more readily as his hands were commencing to freeze in his fur gloves.

Nikita took the lines and held them loosely in his hands, without moving them, delighted at his favorite's sagacity, for indeed, the intelligent horse pointed his ears now in one direction, now in the other, now one ear, now the other, and gradually modified the direction of his course.

"He lacks but the power of speech," said Nikita. "Just look at him. Come, come! There, there!"

The wind was commencing to blow at their backs, they did not feel it so much.

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"How intelligent the beast is!" continued Nikita, in delight. "The little Kirghiz is strong, but stupid. And just see how he pricks up his ears. No telegraph is needed, he scents a *verst* in the distance."

Not a half-hour had passed, when indeed something dark was again seen before them; was this a forest or a village?—whatsoever it was, some posts were to be seen to the right.

Evidently they had again found the road.

"Why, it is Grischkino again," said Nikita, suddenly.

Indeed, at their right lay the same grange from which had fallen so much snow, and further on, the same line with the same frozen linen which the wind had blown so furiously.

Again they drove into the street; again the warm, quiet atmosphere, permeated with contentment, made itself evident; the road strewn with manure was visible; the voices, the singing and the barking of the dog was audible. It was already so dark that lights gleamed in may windnows.

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In the middle of the street, Vassili Andréitch turned his horse towards a large brick house in two parts and stopped at the *porte cochère.*

"Call out Taras," said he to Nikita. Nikita approached the lighted window and knocked with his whip.

"Who is there?"

"Brekhounov, my friend," replied Nikita; "come out an instant."

The man within turned from the window, and two minutes later the outer door was opened; an old *moujik* with a white beard, a tall cap and a coat thrown over a white holiday shirt, appeared, followed by a young man in a red shirt and leather boots.

"You are welcome!" said the old man.

"We have lost our way, brother," said Vassili Andréitch; "we were going to Gorjatschkino, and we have landed here. This is the second time we have lost our way here."

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"Is that so? Pétrouschka, go and open the gate," said the old man, turning to the young one in the red shirt.

"I can do that," gaily replied the youth, reëntering the vestibule.

"We do not want to spend the night here," said Vassili Andréitch.

"And where would you stay to-night? Remain here!"

"I should like to, but I must go on."

"Then at least warm yourself, the samovar is on the table," said the old man.

"I shall not refuse to warm myself. It will not grow darker; on the contrary the moon will rise and it will light the road. Come, Nikita, we will warm ourselves a little."

"Why not? Let us go in," said Nikita, who was almost frozen, and who was very anxious to enter and to warm his frozen members at the stove.

So Vassili Andréitch followed the old man into the room, and Nikita took the sleigh

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through the *porte cochère*, opened by Pétrouschka, and fastened the horse under the eaves of the granary. The ground was covered with a thick bed of manure, and the high *douga* struck against one of the beams of the ceiling. Instantly the cocks and the hens, perched on the beam and shaken by the shock, clucked their objections, the sheep in alarm ran away, the young dog, terrified and angry, barked incessantly at the strangers

Nikita spoke to all; he apologized to the fowls, saying that he would not disturb them again, reproached the sheep for their unreasonable terror, and did not cease to speak soothingly to the dog, while he tied the horse.

"There, that is all right now," said Nikita, shaking the snow from his garments. "Just look at that animal!" he continued, pointing to the dog. "Enough —enough— stupid beast! Enough! You are exciting yourself unnecessarily; we are not thieves."

"That is like the three councilors," said

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the young man pushing the sleigh under the shed with his strong shoulders.

"How so—councilors?" asked Nikita.

"Paülson says: 'A thief furtively draws near the house, the dog barks, that means: Be on your guard; the cock crows, that means: Rise; the cat washes herself, that means: A guest is coming, prepare to receive him well,'" recited the boy, with a broad smile.

Pétrouschka of course could read and write and knew almost by heart Paülson's "Chrestomatie." It was the only volume he possessed, and he liked, especially when slightly intoxicated, to recite from his book maxims which he thought apropos.

"That is quite true," said Nikita.

"You are cold, I presume, little Uncle," added Pétrouschka.

"Yes, somewhat," said Nikita. They crossed the court and entered the *izba*.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE house at which Vassili Andréitch had alighted was occupied by one of the wealthiest families in the village. The family owned five lots and hired land in addition to this. They had six horses, three cows, two calves and some twenty sheep. The family itself consisted of two and twenty persons; four married sons, six grandsons, of whom Peter alone was married, two grandchildren, three orphans and four daughters-in-law with their children. This was one of those rare families which had not divided the patrimonial lands; but here, too, there already for some time existed in secret, dissension, which, as usual, emanated from the women, and which would soon lead to division.

Two sons worked at Moscow, as water

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carriers, another was a soldier. At this time there were in the house the old man, the old woman, two sons, of whom the one from Moscow had come to the *fete* on a visit, and all the women and children; besides the members of the family there was one guest, the magistrate, their neighbor.

In the room above the table hung a lamp which brightly illuminated the tea set, the whisky bottles, the food upon the table, the red bricks of the walls, and the icons, placed in the position of honor between the pictures. The seat of honor at the table was occupied by Vassili Andréitch, who sat there in his fur pelisse, pulling at his brown mustache, at the same time examining the room and its occupants with his hawklike eye. Besides Vassili Andréitch there sat at the table the white-bearded, bald-headed old host in a white, homespun shirt; beside him in a shirt of fine India linen sat his broad-shouldered son from Moscow; then came his second son,

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the eldest brother, who managed the household, and the magistrate, a thin *moujik* with red hair.

The *moujiks*, after having drunk some whisky and eaten a little food, prepared to drink tea. The samovar was already singing upon the floor near the stove. On the benches and on the stove lay children. A woman, too, was sitting by a child's cradle. The old hostess, whose face was full of wrinkles, attentively watched Vassili Andréitch.

At the moment that Nikita entered the room, she was pouring out a glass of whisky, which she offered to Vassili Andréitch.

"Do us the honor, Vassili Andréitch; you can not refuse it on account of the *fete*," said the old woman.

The sight and the odor of the whisky, especially at this moment, when he was cold and exhausted, excited Nikita. He frowned, shook the snow from his cap and kaftan, took up his position before the icons, made the sign

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of the cross three times and bowed before them, as if no one was in the room.

Then he turned towards the old man, bowed to him and all the men at the table, the women near the stove, and after having wished them a "happy *fete*," removed his coat without glancing at the table.

"You are finely frozen, Uncle," said the elder brother, gazing at Nikita's face, eyes and beard, covered with snow. The latter removed his kaftan, shook it again, hung it near the stove and advanced to the table. They, too, offered him whisky. A painful struggle took place within him; he was on the point of taking the glass and pouring the clear, fragrant liquid down his throat, when he looked at Vassili Andréitch, recalled his vow, his lost boots, the cooper, his boy whom he had promised to buy a horse in the spring, and refused it with a sigh.

"I do not drink, thank you," said he with a terrible look, going to the window and seating himself on the seat near it.

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"And why not?" asked the elder brother.

"I do not like it—because I do not," said Nikita, without raising his eyes.

"He cannot," said Vassili Andréitch, who had emptied his glass, and thereupon helped himself to a piece of cake.

"But you will surely drink tea," said the old hostess. "You are thoroughly chilled, my good man. Women, what are you dallying so long for with the samovar?"

"It is ready," said a young woman, with difficulty carrying the samovar and standing it on the table.

Meanwhile Vassili Andréitch was relating how they had lost their way, how they had come to the village twice, how they had met the intoxicated company.

The others were surprised, explained where and why they had lost their way, who the tipsy people were whom they had met, and instructed them as to how they should drive.

"A child could accompany you as far as

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Moltschanowka; you have only to look out on the large square, there is a bush. You did not get that far," said the magistrate.

"You should have remained here over night; the women will make your beds," said the old lady, trying to persuade them.

"And early in the morning, you can set out. That would be the best," said the old man.

"Impossible, brother. I have business," replied Vassili Andréitch. "One hour's delay sometimes cannot be made up for in an entire year," he added, thinking of the grove and of the merchants who could snatch it from him. "We shall get there?" he turned toward Nikita, who did not reply for some time, he still seemed busily engaged in thawing out his beard.

"If we do not lose our way again," said he. Nikita looked gloomy, because he would have liked the whisky, and the only thing that could silence this wish was tea, and this had not yet been offered him.

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"But we need only to reach the turning, from that point we shall go still further, and we cannot lose our way again, since we shall have the forest at the end," replied Vassili Andréitch.

"It is for you to say, Vassili Andréitch; when you want to start, we will start," said Nikita, taking the glass of tea offered him.

"We will drink our tea, and then set out." Nikita said nothing; he merely shook his head, carefully poured the tea into the saucer, and began to warm his hands in the steam. Then he bit off a tiny piece of sugar, bowed to the host, and said:

"To your health!" After which he drank the warm beverage.

"If some one would but accompany us to the turning," said Vassili Andréitch.

"Some one can," replied the elder brother. "Pétrouschka will harness to and take you to the turning."

"Then harness to, brother; I will show myself to be appreciative."

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"No, no, dear sir," said the obliging old man. "We are very pleased to render you a service."

"Pétrouschka, go, harness to the mare," said the eldest son.

"I can do that," said Pétrouschka, with his broad smile, at once taking his cap from its nail and going upon his errand.

While Pétrouschka was performing his duties, the conversation returned to the point at which it had been interrupted by the arrival of Vassili Andréitch. The old man complained to his neighbor, the magistrate, of his third son, who had not sent him anything for the *fete* day, but had sent his wife a French shawl.

"The youth of to-day does not respect old age," said he.

"Ah, yes," said the magistrate. "They have become too shrewd. Demotschkin broke his father's arm. It all originates from having too much intelligence."

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Nikita listened, examined the faces and evidently longed to participate in the conversation, but he was too busy drinking tea and could only approve by shaking his head.

He drank one glass after the other and gradually felt an agreeable warmth through his body. The conversation continued in the same strain and was apparently general, for the question of division was being discussed; it was desired by the second son, who sat there, listening with a moody air. It was, as it seemed, a sore point, which preoccupied all the members of the family, but out of respect to the others, they had not touched upon the subject of their own affairs before strangers. Now the old man could bear it no longer, and with tears in his eyes he maintained that while he lived he would agree to no partition, for all was well as matters were.

"It would be just like the Matwejews," said the magistrate; "it was a large family,

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and now that the property has been divided, no one has anything."

"And you want it so, too?" the old man turned to his son, who made no reply and an embarrassing silence ensued, interrupted by Pétrouschka, who having harnessed to, had entered the room several moments before, and stood there smiling.

"There is a story in 'Paülson' which runs thus," said he. "'The father bade his sons break up a bundle of rods. They could not chop all the rods together, but by taking one at a time, they found it very easy.' It is the same thing," he added, with his broad grin. "I am ready!"

"Then we can go," said Vassili Andréitch. "As for the partition, grandfather, do not yield. You earned the fortune and you are the master of it. Go rather to the court, it will all be arranged there."

"He is so obstinate," said the old man, al most tearfully, "that it is difficult to get on

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with him! He is as if possessed with a devil."

Meanwhile Nikita, having finished his fifth glass of tea, hoped to be offered a sixth. But there was no more water in the samovar, and he received none; besides, Vassili Andréitch was putting on his second pelisse. So nothing was left for Nikita but to rise, to put back into the bowl his piece of sugar, to wipe the perspiration from his face with his gown and to don his kaftan.

Having done this, he sighed deeply, thanked his hosts and passed from the warm, well-lighted room into the cold, dark hall, where the wind whistled through the crevices and the snow came in through the door. Then he stepped out into the black courtyard.

Pétrouschka, in his pelisse, was standing in the middle of the court, beside his horse, and, still smiling, recited some lines from "Paülson," to this effect: "The storm overcasts the sky, the snow falls, the wind howls now like a beast, weeps now like a child."

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Nikita nodded his head in approval and arranged the lines.

The old man, accompanying Vassili Andréitch, carried a lantern into the hall to light the way; but the light was immediately extinguished by the wind. Even in the court it could be seen that the snowstorm was increasing.

"What weather!" thought Vassili Andréitch, "it is very probable that we shall not reach our destination, but what is to be done? Business before everything! Moreover, all is in readiness, and my host's horse harnessed to. With the help of God we shall get there."

The old man, too, thought it was imprudent to set out, but he had once advised his guests, they had not heeded his warnings. "Perhaps it is because I am old that I am nervous," thought he; "they will be all right, and we can, at least, retire as we are in the habit of doing, without any fear for them."

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Pétrouschka, also, saw that it was dangerous to go out; he was somewhat uneasy about it, but gave no sign. He put on a bold front, and the lines "The snow falls," etc., only expressed what was really going on without. As for Nikita, he had no desire to depart, but he had become accustomed to having no will but that of others.

So no one detained the travelers.

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CHAPTER V.

VASSILI ANDREITCH approached the sleigh, which he found with difficulty in the dark, crept into it and took up the lines.

"Forwards!" cried he. Pétrouschka, upon his knees in his sleigh, let his horse go. Monkharty, who had been neighing for several moments because he knew the mare was ahead of him, followed suit, and they drove out into the street. They went through the village again, taking the same road, passing the same house at the side of which had hung the frozen linen, which was no longer there, passing the same grange, already almost buried in the snow, the same osiers which swayed with the same mournful sound, and again entered that sea of snow in which the storm was raging. The wind was so high

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that when it blew from the side, at the moment the travelers drove against it, it shook the sleigh and held back the horse. Pétrouschka drove on ahead with his mare and, from time to time, called out words of encouragement. Monkharty followed the mare.

At the end of ten minutes, Pétrouschka turned and said something which neither Vassili Andréitch nor Nikita could hear, on account of the wind. But they divined that they had arrived at the turning. And indeed, Pétrouschka did turn to the right, and the wind, which had been coming from the side, again blew in their faces—to the right, through the snow, they saw something black. It was the bush at the turning point.

"Now, God be with you!"

"Thank you, Pétrouschka!"

"The tempest overcasts the sky," declaimed Pétrouschka, and he disappeared.

"A verse-maker," said Vassili Andréitch, shaking the lines.

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"Yes, a brave fellow, a typical *moujik*," said Nikita.

They drove on. Nikita wrapped himself up as well as he could, and leaning his head upon his shoulders, he covered his throat with his beard; he sat there in silence, trying to retain the warmth which the tea had stored up in him. He saw before him the straight lines of the shafts which were constantly deceiving him, and which he mistook for the tracks of a road. He saw the horse's moving hindquarters, with his knotted tail, and farther on the high camber and the horse's head and neck with its fluttering mane. Occasionally he saw the posts, so that he knew they were on the road and had no reason to be uneasy.

Vassili Andréitch held the lines and let the horse take the gait which suited him best. But Monkharty, although he had rested in the village, did not seem anxious to go forward and seemed to wish to leave the road, and finally Vassili Andréitch had to guide him several times.

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"To the right is a post, here another, and here a third," counted Vassili Andréitch, "and before us is the forest," thought he, but that which he took for forest was but a bush. They drove past it and trotted fifty metres farther; the fourth post was lacking and the forest was not there.

"We should find the forest soon," thought Vassili Andréitch, and, excited by the whisky and the tea, he pulled the lines. The good, docile beast obeyed, now walked, now trotted, whithersoever he was led, notwithstanding the fact that he knew he was being driven where he should not go. Ten minutes more passed. The forest still did not appear.

"I believe we are lost again," said Vassili Andréitch, stopping the horse.

Nikita, without saying a word, alighted, and holding fast his overcoat, which the wind blew in all directions, he waded in the snow, first on the one side, then on the other. Three times he disappeared altogether. Finally,

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he returned and took the lines from Vassili Andréitch's hands.

"We must drive to the right," said he with decision, turning around.

"If it be to the right, drive to the right," said Vassili Andréitch, giving up the reins and thrusting his frozen hands into the fur cuffs on his coat. "If the horse would only take us back to Grischkino," said he.

Nikita made no reply.

"Now, my friend, show what you can do," he called to the horse, but the animal, notwithstanding the cracking of the lines, would only walk. In some places the snow was knee-deep and the sleigh advanced by fits and starts.

Nikita brought forth his whip and beat the horse. The animal, unaccustomed to the lash, made a sudden plunge, and broke into a trot, but soon changed his pace and walked. Five minutes were spent thus. It was very dark, and the air was so filled with the drift-

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ing snow that at times even the camber could not be seen. Sometimes it seemed as if the sleigh was not moving on the road which retreated.

Suddenly the horse paused, evidently scenting something which was not good. Nikita leaped lightly to the ground, threw down the reins, and hastened to the horse's head in order to inquire into the cause of his sudden halt; but scarcely had he taken a step in front of the horse than his feet slipped out and he fell into a deep hole, indistinguishable in the darkness.

"Tpr, Tpr, Tpı!" said he to himself as he fell, vainly trying to obtain a firm footing, but he could not do so, and only stopped on reaching the bottom of the ravine, in which he was embedded up to his waist in a thick bed of snow.

Disturbed by Nikita's fall, a pile of snow, amassed on the edge, fell upon him and covered his back.

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"Ah, you . . . !" said he, in a tone of reproach, to the ravine and the pile of snow, shaking it from his back.

"Nikita, Nikita!" cried Vassili Andréitch from above. But Nikita made no reply.

He had no time; he shook himself, then he searched for the whip, which in his fall had escaped from his grasp.

Having found the whip, he tried to climb up the spot down which he had rolled; but it was not possible; he fell back every time, and was obliged to look for another means of egress, which would be more easy of accomplishment.

A few yards from the spot where he had fallen, by creeping on all fours he succeeded in reaching the top of the ravine, and he followed the edge of it to the place where the horse should have been found. He saw neither horse nor sleigh; but, as he was walking against the wind, he heard Vassili Andréitch call out and heard the horse neigh before he saw them.

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"I am coming, I am coming! What did you say?" he asked.

Only when quite near the sleigh, did he see the horse, whom he had addressed, and Vassili Andréitch standing near him, and who seemed to him taller than ever.

"Where have you been so long? We must go back. We will at least return to Grischkino," said the master angrily to his servant.

"I should be delighted, Vassili Andréitch, if I could return, but how? Here is a ravine so deep that if we should fall into it, we would not soon get out. I fell into it and could scarcely climb out."

"Well, what is to be done? We can not remain here, we shall have to go somewhere," said Vassili Andréitch.

Nikita made no reply. He reëntered the sleigh, turning his back to the wind, and took off his boots in order to empty out the snow. Then he took some straw and stuffed it as well as he could into the hole in his left boot.

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Vassili Andréitch made no remark, he seemed to give Nikita full permission to act. Having drawn on his boots again, Nikita thrust his legs into the straw in the sleigh, put on his mittens, took the lines and guided the horse along the edge of the ravine. But scarcely had they gone a hundred paces, than the horse again paused. Before him lay another gap.

Once more Nikita descended and began to wade through the snow. He was away quite a while. Finally he returned on the opposite side from which he had started.

"Vassili Andréitch, are you still alive?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Vassili Andréitch. "Well?"

"It is impossible to see anything; it is dark, and there are nothing but ravines here. We shall have to follow the direction of the wind."

They set out. Again Nikita walked through the snow and again he fell down; at length,

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quite breathless, he paused beside the sleigh.

"Well?" asked Vassili Andréitch.

"Well, what? I am out of breath and the horse refuses to go on."

"What is to be done, then?"

"Wait a little." Nikita disappeared, but soon returned.

"Follow me," said he, stepping in front of the horse.

Vassili Andréitch gave no more orders, but submissively did as Nikita told him.

"Here, this way!" cried Nikita; walking quickly to the right, and seizing Monkharty by the bridle, he turned him towards a pile of snow. The animal at first resisted, then, however, he leaped in the hope of clearing the heap, but he did not succeed and was buried in it up to the camber.

"Get down!" cried Nikita to Vassili Andréitch, who continued to remain in the sleigh.

And, without any delay, Nikita, seizing the

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sleigh by one of the thills, pushed it toward the horse.

"It is heavy, friend," said he to the bay, "but what are we to do? Make an effort, ha, ha, a little effort!" cried he. The horse pulled once, twice, but did not free himself. He pointed his ears and smelled the snow, as if he were reflecting.

"Come, brother, this will not do," said Nikita to the bay in a persuasive voice, "come, try again!"

Again Nikita seized one of the shafts and Vassili Andréitch the other. The animal shook his head and suddenly pulled.

"Ha, ha! you will not drown!" cried Nikita. One bound, a second, a third, and the horse was out of the snow-pile, panting and shaking himself. Nikita wanted to lead him further, but Vassili Andréitch, in his two fur coats, was so out of breath that he could not walk any further and sank into the sleigh.

"Let me get my breath," said he, untying

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the scarf with which he had fastened the collar of his coat.

"Then, you can rest," said Nikita; "I will lead the horse," and both guided him, Nikita at the bridle and Vassili Andréitch at the reins, making about ten paces and then Nikita paused.

The spot on which Nikita came to a halt was not a hollow; it was, however, sheltered somewhat from the wind by a slight elevation. There were moments, when, behind this sheltered spot, the wind seemed to be blowing less furiously; but that was not for long, and the storm, as if to recover the moment of repose, whistled with redoubled force and blew with more violence.

One of these gusts of wind came at the moment when Vassili Andréitch, having regained his breath, was alighting from the sleigh and approaching Nikita to examine with him their situation and to seek to remedy it. They stooped involuntarily and did

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not speak until the fury of the wind had abated. Monkharty, too, laid back his ears discontentedly and shook his head. When it was calmer, Nikita took off his mittens, put them in his belt, and after having breathed upon his hands,he began to detach the bridle from the camber.

"What are you doing there?" asked Vassili Andréitch.

"I am unharnessing; what else is there to do? I cannot stand it any longer," replied Nikita, apologetically.

"But can we not reach some point from here?"

"No, we should only fatigue the horse unnecessarily. You see in what a state the poor beast is?" said Nikita, pointing to the patient horse, who stood by ready for anything, and whose sides, bathed in sweat, quivered painfully. "We shall have to spend the night here," he added, as he would have said if he had been at an inn, beginning to take off the camber.

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"But shall we not perish with the cold?" exclaimed Vassili Andréitch.

"Possibly. But if we do we shall have to make the best of it," replied Nikita.

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CHAPTER VI.

VASSILI ANDREITCH, with his two fur pelisses, was quite warm, especially after the exertion he had just had. But a cold chill ran down his back when he found that he should be obliged to spend the night where he was.

In order to comfort himself somewhat, he entered the sleigh and drew from his pocket some cigarettes and matches.

Meanwhile Nikita was unharnessing the horse. He took off one piece after the other, during this work trying to encourage the horse.

"Come, come," said he, leading him out of the thills. "We will tie you here. I will put some hay here for you and take off the curb," said he. "You can eat and you will not be sad."

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But Monkharty did not seem consoled by Nikita's words; he fidgeted from one leg to the other, leaned against the sleigh, turned his crupper against the wind, and rubbed his head on Nikita's sleeve.

However, as if he did not wish to refuse the hay which Nikita offered him, he quickly took a mouthful, but almost immediately he decided that this was not the moment to eat hay, and let it fall; the wind bore it away in an instant and covered it with snow.

"Now we will establish a signal," said Nikita, turning the front of the sleigh against the wind; tying together the thills with the thongs, he raised them and leaned them against the front seat.

"If the snow should cover us, the good people would find us, thanks to the thills, and would pull us out," said Nikita. "The old people taught us this."

In the meantime Vassili Andréitch, opening his pelisse, struck match after match

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against the box without succeeding in lighting his cigarette, for his hands trembled and the wind extinguished the light before it could have been carried to the cigarette. Finally one match burned and for a moment it lighted up his fur, his index finger with the golden ring, and the straw which peeped out of the sack—the cigarette was lighted. Once, twice, he drew eagerly, swallowed the smoke and blew it through his mustache; but before he could draw again, the wind blew out the light of the cigarette and carried it away. Yet, these few puffs of smoke had sufficed to comfort Vassili Andréitch.

"Since we must spend the night here, let us sleep in this spot," said he with decision. And when he noticed the thills raised in the air, he felt the desire to make the signal more distinct and to instruct Nikita. "Just wait, I shall make a standard here," said he, tying the scarf, which he had taken off some time since and thrown in the sleigh, on the thill thongs.

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The scarf immediately began to flutter hither and thither in the wind. Now it clung fast to the shafts, now the wind blew it so that it flapped.

"See there, how fine that is," said Vassili Andréitch, satisfied with his work, and re-entering the sleigh. "Side by side it would be warmer, but there is no room here for us both."

"I shall find a place," replied Nikita; "only the horse must be covered over, for the poor fellow is covered with frost. Get up, please," he added, approaching the sleigh and drawing out from under Vassili Andréitch the canvas sack.

Then he doubled it and covered Monkharty with it. "It will be warmer, stupid fellow," said he to the horse, laying the heavy thongs upon the sack-cloth. "You will not need the sack."

Having taken both, he went behind the sleigh, made a tiny hole in the snow, put the

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straw in there, then he pulled his cap over his ears, wrapped himself in his kaftan, seated himself upon the straw, leaned against the back of the sleigh, which now shielded him from snow and wind, and covered himself with the coarse rug.

Vassili Andréitch shook his head in token of disapprobation of Nikita's actions, for as a rule, he disapproved of the ignorance and the stupidity of the *moujiks*, and began to put to rights the things in his bed.

He arranged the straw which was left, laid himself down to one side, thrust his hands in his sleeves and rested his head in the corner, which sheltered him from the wind.

He did not feel inclined to sleep. He reflected, he thought of the same thing always, of the one aim which formed the pleasure and the pride of his life; of the money which he had already made, of that which he could still make, of how much people with whom he was acquainted had made, and how much

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money they had, how these people had made and were making their money, and how he, too, like these same people, might still make a great deal.

"The oak will serve to make vats, besides the timber, that is certain; there will be in cut wood about thirty *sagénes* to a *désiatine*," he calculated, referring to the produce of the grove which he was on his way to purchase. "But I shall not give him ten thousand rubles, eight are enough, allowing for the glades. I will bribe the surveyor; for one hundred or one hundred and fifty rubles, he will assign me five *désiatines* more of glade. He will let me have it for five thousand. Three thousand he will receive at once. That will make his mouth water," thought he, touching the pouch containing the money. "But how could we have lost our way from the turning? God knows. The forest and the box should be here. Only, the dogs are not barking. They never bark when they ought to, the wretches."

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He turned back his collar and listened. In the darkness he could only see the bay and his back upon which the sackcloth fluttered in the wind, which still whistled; the shafts rattled, the cloth flapped and the snow beat against the sleigh. He wrapped himself in his fur again. "If I had known, I should have remained at Grischkino over night. No matter, we shall reach our destination to-morrow. The others will not make the journey either in such weather." And he recalled the fact that on the ninth he was to receive his money from the butcher for the animals sold. "He was to bring the money himself; now he will not find me at home, and my wife will not be clever enough to take the money from him; ah, but she is ignorant, she does not know how to manage people," he thought, recalling the manner in which she had received the chief of the police who had visited him the day before. "To be sure, she is a woman. Where has she seen anything? What a house-

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hold was that of her parents! Her father was a rich *moujik* of the village, nothing more; a miserable little mill and an inn were all he owned, while I—what did I make out of it in fifteen years? A grocer's shop, two wine vaults, a mill, a corn-magazine, two farms, a house and granary," he enumerated proudly. "That was not in my father's lifetime! Who is to-day the head of the entire district? Brekhounov! And wherefore? Because I understand my business. I apply myself instead of doing like so many others, who only can sleep or busy themselves with nonsense. They think money can be made without work. Oh, no, it is necessary to work and to think. They think luck makes the man. There are the Mironovs, they are millionaires, and why? Because they have worked and God has rewarded them. If the Lord will but give me good health!"

And the thought that he might, perchance, become a millionaire like Mironov, who had

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begun with nothing, excited him so much that he felt the need of speaking to some one, but no one was at hand to whom he could speak. If they could but have reached Gorjatchkino, he might have spoken a word with the land-owner and have shown him who he was.

"Just see how it blows! We shall be hemmed in, so that by morning we will not be able to get through," thought he at the sound of the wind, which howled around the front seat of the sleigh.

"Why did I listen to Nikita?" thought he. "We should have reached some place, if it had only been Grischkino, where we might have spent the night with Tarass. While now we can sit here all night. . . . Well, what was I just saying? Ah, yes! That God recompenses those who work, and not the idlers, the dependents or the blockheads. What if I should smoke?"

He sat upon the seat, took out his cigarette

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case, lay on his stomach so that he could protect the light from the wind, but it found a passage and extinguished one match after the other.

Finally he succeeded in lighting the cigarette, and the fact of having succeeded made him very joyous. Although the wind smoked his cigarette more than he did himself, the few puffs which he drew gave him pleasure. He leaned back in the corner of the sleigh, wrapped himself up warm, and again began his meditations, his dreams, which ended in slumber.

Suddenly he felt a shock and awoke. Was it Monkharty who had tried to pull out the hay in the sleigh, or had something stirred within him? Whatsoever it was, he awoke, his heart beating so violently and so rapidly that it almost seemed to him as if the sleigh were shaking. He opened his eyes. There was no change round about him, only that it was lighter. "Day is breaking," thought he;

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"it will not be long until morning now." But immediately thereafter, he remembered that it was lighter only because the moon had risen. He sat up and looked next at the horse. The bay still stood there, his back against the wind, his whole body trembling. The coarse cover was full of snow and blown off one side by the wind, the breeching was not straight, and the head with the fluttering mane was now visible. Vassili Andréitch looked behind the sleigh. Nikita was in the same position. The sackcloth and his feet were covered thickly with snow. "If only the *moujik* does not freeze to death! He is too thinly clad! I shall yet be called to account for him. He is so tired from having run, and together with this his clothing is poor," thought Vassili Andréitch. The thought occurred to him of taking the cover off the horse and putting it over Nikita; but it was too cold to rise and move about, and too, the horse might take cold. "Why did I take him with me? It was

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a big piece of stupidity on her part," thought he, referring by these words to his unloved wife, and, as he spoke, again leaning back in the sleigh. "My uncle spent a night just like this once," he said to himself, "and nothing happened to him. . . . While Sebastian was dead, frozen stiff as a quarter of beef. Had I only remained over night at Grischkino, nothing would have happened."

And carefully enveloping himself in his pelisse, in order not to lose any of the warmth of the fur and to keep himself warm from head to foot, he closed his eyes to try to go to sleep again. But, notwithstanding all his efforts, sleep would not return; on the contrary, he was wide-awake. He again began to calculate his gains, to go over in his mind what was owing him, to admire himself, proud of the position to which he had attained—but all these thoughts were interrupted by a secret uneasiness which gradually stole over him and by the regret of not having

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remained for the night at Grischkino. He turned several times, rearranged his bed, sought a spot more sheltered from the wind, but he was uncomfortable everywhere; he rose again, changed his position, wrapped up his legs, closed his lips and remained motionless. But either his cramped limbs pained him or the wind blew through somewhere, and, after having been quiet for several moments he was reminded of the fact that he might have slept comfortably until this, home at Grischkino, and he rose again, moved about, again wrapped himself up and again lay down.

For a moment, it seemed to Vassili Andréitch as if he heard the distant crowing of a cock. He was pleased at this, threw back the collar of his pelisse and listened attentively; but nothing was to be heard but the whistling of the wind and the snow beating against the sleigh. Nikita remained in the same position; he did not stir and did not

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answer Vassili Andréitch, who had called him several times. "He cares little for the situation, he is asleep," thought Vassili angrily, looking back at Nikita, who was covered with snow.

Vassili Andréitch stood up and lay down probably twenty times. It seemed to him as if the night was interminable. "It will soon be morning," thought he once. "Shall I look at my watch? But it is too cold to unbutton my pelisse. However, if I could feel that morning was near, I would wait more patiently. We might begin to harness to." In the depths of his heart, Vassili Andréitch knew full well that it could not yet be morning, but he was beginning to grow more and more uneasy, and he would have liked to have seen the time, though he was afraid to know it. Carefully he unbuttoned his coat, thrust in his hand, and sought some time before he found his vest. With great difficulty he drew out his silver watch, enameled

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with blue flowers. Without a light he could not see. He again lay down upon his stomach, took out some matches and began to light them. This time he exercised more precaution, and picking out a match having a great deal of phosphorus, he lighted it at once. He held the dial towards the light, looked at it, and could not believe his eyes. . . . It was only ten minutes past twelve. The whole night lay before him.

"Ah, how long this night is!" thought Vassili Andréitch, feeling a cold chill run down his back; he buttoned up his coat again, wrapped himself up and leaned back in the corner of the sleigh. Suddenly a new sound broke the monotony. The tone increased, and when it had reached a certain point, it gradually grew fainter. Undoubtedly it was a wolf. And it must be quite near by, for he could hear him move his jaws as the tones changed. Vassili Andréitch put back his collar still farther and listened attentively.

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Monkharty, on his part, listened with no less attention by moving his ears, and when the wolf had finished his howling, the horse changed his position and neighed as if to warn his master. After this incident, Vassili Andréitch could neither sleep nor have peace of mind. It was vain to try to fix his thoughts upon his business, his notoriety, his dignity, his wealth; fear possessed him more and more, and all his thoughts were dominated by the regret of not having remained at Grischkino for the night.

"After all, what is the grove? Thank God, I have enough without it. I should have stayed all night there," said he to himself. "They say drunkards are more liable to freeze to death, and I have been drinking more than usual."

And on examining his sensations, he found that he was trembling without being able to tell whether from cold or fear. He essayed to cover himself up and to be still, but he

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could not. It was impossible for him to remain in one position. He wanted to alight from the sleigh, to do something, in order to stifle his fear, which was increasing and which he felt powerless to conquer. Again he drew out cigarettes and matches, but had only three left, and they were all poor ones, they would not burn.

"The deuce take thee, thou accursed one!" he cried, without knowing whom he was addressing, and throwing the torn cigarette away. He was on the point of sending the match-box after it, when he thought better of it, and put the case in his pocket. He was a prey to such uneasiness that he could not remain where he was. He crept out of the sleigh, and, turning his back to the wind, he began to tighten his belt.

"Why lie there and await death? Why not mount the horse and ride away?" suddenly occurred to him. "The horse, once mounted, will not stop. As for him," he said to him-

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self, thinking of Nikita, "death matters little to him. What is his life? He will not even regret it. While thank God, have something to live for."

And, untying the horse, he flung the reins upon his back, and tried unsuccessfully to mount. Then he climbed into the sleigh in order to mount from there. But the sleigh shook beneath his weight and he lost his balance again. Finally for the third time he drew the horse up to the sleigh so that he could lie upon his stomach on the horse's back. For several moments he remained in this position, then he pushed himself forward, threw one leg over the horse's back and seated himself upon it; instead of putting his feet in the stirrups, he thrust them into the straps of the breeching. The shaking of the sleigh awakened Nikita. He sat up. Vassili Andréitch thought he heard him say something.

"Who will listen to you, blockhead? Why should I perish?" said Vassili Andréitch.

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Then he arranged over his knees the fluttering ends of his pelisse, turned the horse and set out in the direction in which he supposed must lie the grove and the forester's box.

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CHAPTER VII.

SINCE he had seated himself behind the sleigh, covering himself with the coarse sack, Nikita had not stirred. Like all men living in the midst of nature and knowing want, he was patient, and could wait for hours, even days quietly, without experiencing either uneasiness or excitement. He heard how his master called to him, but he made no reply, because he did not want to stir. The thought that he might die on this night, that, in all probability, he would die, occurred to him at the moment when he made his bed behind the sleigh. The warm tea, and his exertions in the snow had, to be sure, warmed him, but he knew that the warmth would not last long, and that afterwards he would not be strong enough to warm himself by his move-

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ments. He felt that he was in the same condition as a horse which cannot go any farther without food. Moreover, the foot in the torn boot was stiff and he could not feel the pain in his big toe any longer. His body was growing colder and colder.

The thought that he should die that night seemed to him neither unpleasant nor especially terrible, for his life had been far from being one continual *fete*; on the contrary, it had been one of incessant servitude and he was commencing to weary of it. He felt no fear, because besides the masters, like Vassili Andréitch, at the service of whom he was on this earth, he felt himself to be above all subservient to the Master of Masters, to Him who had sent him to this world, and he knew that in dying he still remained in the power of this Master, and that this Master was good.

"It is a pity to leave that to which one has grown used. But what is to be done? One must become used to a new life."

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"The sins?" thought he—and he recalled his drunkenness, his violence to his wife, his oaths, his negligence in the fulfillment of his religious duties, the fasts he had not observed—and for all of which the priest rebuked him at confession. "Yes, surely, the sins exist! Well, did I commit them voluntarily? God certainly created me a sinner, therefore the sins. How avoid them?"

And, having decided thus, he yielded to the memories which of themselves entered his head. He recalled the arrival of Marfa, the intoxication of the servants, his refusal to drink the whisky, the drive, Tarass' *izba*, the conversation with regard to the partition, his boy, Monkharty, who was warm beneath his cover, and his master, who lay uneasily in the creaking sleigh. "The good man will not, I think, rejoice at this hour," thought he; "one does not like to die when one has so much."

All these memories and thoughts became confused, and he fell asleep.

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At the moment when Vassili Andréitch, on mounting the horse, pushed the sleigh, against the back of which Nikita was leaning, one of the runners struck his back and this awoke him. He was involuntarily forced to change his position, and, straightening his legs with difficulty, he shook off the snow and stood up; as he did so, the cold chilled his body. He understood that Vassili Andréitch had abandoned him, and he called after him to leave him the cloth which lay upon the horse's back.

But Vassili Andréitch did not stop and disappeared in the mist of snow. Left alone, Nikita reflected. He felt that he had not the strength with which to go in search of a dwelling; return to his seat was no longer possible, the snow had buried it; as for the sleigh, he felt that he could not get warm there, for he had no covering, his miserable kaftan affording him no warmth. He was as cold as if he had on but his shirt. He stood

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for several moments meditating, then he sighed, and without removing the coarse covering from his head he sank heavily into the sleigh in his master's seat.

He crouched in the bottom, but he could not get warm. He remained thus about five minutes, his entire frame trembling; then the chill ceased, and gradually he began to lose consciousness.

Was he dying or was he falling asleep? He did not know; but he felt equally prepared for the one or the other. If the Lord wished him to awake again in this world, to live as formerly in servitude, to care for the horses of others, to carry the corn of others to the mill, to drink and to vow not to drink as he had done, to give up his money to his wife and the cooper, and to wait until his boy grew up, His will be done! If the Lord wished him to awaken in another world, where all would be new and joyous, not to be compared with anything in this world, not

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even with his childhood, with his mother's affection, his games with his comrades, the prairies, the forests, the winter excursions, if He wished him to recommence a new life, one very different from any other—then, too, His will be done! With this Nikita fully lost consciousness.

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CHAPTER VIII.

MEANWHILE Vassili Andréitch urged the horse, with his feet and the reins, in the direction in which he supposed he should find the forest and the box. The snow blinded him, and the wind was so high that it seemed to wish to arrest his course. But he pressed on, leaned forward and gathered up his coat, which he put between his legs. The horse proceeded with difficulty, but docilely.

For five minutes he rode straight along, as it seemed to him, without seeing anything but the horse's head and the white expanse, and without hearing anything but the whistling of the wind about the horse's ears and the collar of his fur pelisse.

Suddenly he saw something black in front

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of him. His heart leaped for joy, and Vassili Andréitch rode towards this dark object, already seeing before him the walls of the village houses. But the object did not move, nor was it a village, but rather a high tuft of mog-wort growing on the boundary of two fields, and which had come through the snow and was waving in the wind.

The sight of this mog-wort tortured by the merciless wind made Vassili Andréitch start without any reason, and he hastily drove the horse forward without heeding that by this he was changing his former course. He thought he was riding in the same direction in which were the woods and the forester's box. The horse wanted to go to the right, therefore he guided him to the left.

Again something lay before him. He was delighted, for he was convinced that the village was at hand. But it was another boundary line overgrown with g ass. This grass inspired Vassili Andréitch with fear, for

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it was not like that he had just seen, having near it the prints of a horse's hoofs. Vassili Andréitch leaned over and examined them; they were, indeed, those of a horse, and they could only be his. He must have ridden in a circle.

"I am lost if I continue like this," thought he. In order not to allow fear to gain the mastery over him, he urged on his horse. Once it seemed to him as if he heard the barking of dogs and the howling of wolves, but these sounds were so faint and indistinct that he did not know if he really heard them or if it only seemed so to him. He paused and listened anxiously.

Suddenly a terrible, deafening cry, quite near, rang in his ears, and he trembled. Vassili Andréitch clung to his horse's neck, but the horse, too, was trembling, and the terrible cry grew more terrible. For several seconds Vassili Andréitch could not collect himself enough to realize what it really could be.

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What was it? Simply Monkharty, who had neighed with all the force of which his voice was capable. "The deuce, how you frightened me!" cried Vassili Andréitch.

But he was aware of the true cause of his uneasiness and could no longer shake it off.

"I must collect myself, I must compose myself," said he to himself, yet he could not control his feelings and drove the horse on, without noticing that he was riding with the wind and not against it. His body, especially when the horse walked, was cold, ached and shivered. He no longer thought of the forester's box and only wished the one thing, to return to the sleigh, in order not to freeze alone, like that solitary mog-wort in the midst of that terrible snowy desert.

Suddenly the horse stumbled, remained stuck fast in a snowdrift, pawed the air and fell back upon his flanks. Vassili Andréitch leaped quickly down, taking with him the breeching upon which his foot had rested and

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the pad which he had caught hold of on alighting. The horse was scarcely free from his rider, than he recovered at once, shook himself, and with one bound ran away, dragging with him the cover and the thongs, and leaving Vassili Andréitch alone with his fate. Vassili Andréitch at first tried to catch the horse, but the snow was so deep and his furs were so heavy, that he took only twenty steps and paused. "The grove, the cattle, the farm, the shop, the wine vaults," thought he, "what will become of all this? What does all this mean? It can not be," thought he. And he knew not why, but he recalled the mogwort swayed by the wind, which he had passed twice, and he was possessed by a fear so great that he no longer believed in the reality of what had happened. He wondered if he were not dreaming, but that was not possible.

That was real snow which beat upon his face and threatened to bury him, and that

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was a real desert in which he now stood alone, like that mog-wort, awaiting inevitable death.

"Holy Virgin! Saint Nicholas, the miracle worker!" he cried, recalling the services of the day before, and the holy image with the blackened face, encircled by a golden aureole, and the tapers which he had sold for that icon, and which had been returned to him, scarcely burnt away at all, and which he had again laid in the drawer. He began to pray to this same Nicholas the miracle-worker, promised him a *Te Deum* and to light tapers in his honor. But at the same time he clearly understood that this image, the tapers, the priests, the services, all this was very important, very necessary here below, in the church, but that in this place they would not aid him; that between these tapers, these services and his present desperate situation there could be no connection.

"I must not lose courage. I must follow

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the traces of the horse, or else they will speedily be covered with snow," occurred to him, and he hastened forward. Notwithstanding his resolution to walk slowly, he ran, fell down, got up and fell down again. The traces of the horse were not to be found in those places where the snow was not high.

"I am lost," thought Vassili Andréitch, "I can not even follow his traces." At this very moment, on looking before him, he saw a black shadow. It was Monkharty, and not only he, but also the sleigh and the shafts. The horse, his harness on his flanks, was standing in his usual place, shaking his head, which the bridle, caught in one of his feet, pulled towards the ground. It transpired that Vassili Andréitch had been in the same moat into which he had once sunk with Nikita, that the horse had led him back to the sleigh, and that he had alighted scarcely fifty paces from the sleigh.

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CHAPTER IX.

With difficulty having reached the sleigh, Vassili Andréitch clung fast to the same, and remained thus for some time, motionless, seeking composure and breath. Nikita was no longer in his old place, but something was lying under the snow in the sleigh, and Vassili Andréitch thought it was he.

Just now Vassili Andréitch's fears were entirely dissipated; and if he still feared anything it was the terrible sensation of fear which he had just experienced at the moment when he was on his horse, and especially at the moment when he was left alone in the heap of snow. He must not now allow that fear to steal over him again, and in order that it might not happen, he must not think of his safety, but of something else; he must

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undertake something else. Then, therefore, he opened his pelisse and stood with his back to the wind. When he had drawn a deep breath and shaken the snow out of his boots and gloves, he wrapped himself in his coat, drawing his belt tighter, as was his custom when going out to the *moujiks* who had brought grain, in order to buy, and when he was going to work.

The first thing which it seemed essential for him to do, was to free the horse's foot. This he did, putting Monkharty in his old place and going around the beast to put his harness in order. But, at this moment, he saw something stir in the sleigh, and Nikita's head appeared, coming from under the snow with which it was covered. The *moujik* raised himself and sat up, evidently employing all of his strength in order to do so; he made strange gestures before his nose as if to drive away flies, and muttered something which seemed an appeal to Vassili Andréitch.

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The latter dropped the cover without having rearranged it, and advanced to the sleigh.

"What do you want?" he asked. "What did you say?"

"I am d—d—dying," said Nikita with an effort. "You can give my wage to my boy or to my wife. It makes no difference."

"Eh, what? Are you very cold?"

"I feel that death is coming. . . . . Forgive me, for Christ's sake," said Nikita, in a plaintive voice, continuing to make the gestures before his face as if he were chasing away flies.

For several instants Vassili Andréitch stood motionless and silent, then with the same decision with which he closed a bargain, he stepped back, pushed up the sleeves of his pelisse and with both hands began to take out the snow which covered Nikita. This operation completed, he quickly took off his belt, laid aside his pelisse, and, pushing Nikita into the bottom of the sleigh, he lay

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down upon him; so besides putting the fur on him, he covered him too, with his warm body.

He thrust the edges of the fur between Nikita and the wooden part of the sleigh, and remained thus, holding with his knees the fronts of the pelisse, his head resting against the seat, hearing now neither the horse's movements, nor the whistling of the wind, but only the breathing of his servant. The latter for a long time remained motionless, then he drew a deep breath and stirred, evidently feeling warmth return.

"There, you see, and you talked of dying. Lie quiet and warm yourself, then we will—" Then to his great surprise he could say no more, for tears entered his eyes and his lower lip quivered. He ceased speaking, and gulped down the rest of his speech.

"I have had so much anxiety, I have grown weak," thought he, but this weakness, far from being disagreeable to him, prepared for him a pleasure of which he had never dreamed.

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"We will do so! . . . That is what I am!" he repeated, with a sort of tender pride. He remained silent for quite a while, wiping his eyes on the fur, and holding by his knees one of the edges of the pelisse which the wind was blowing aside. But he was very anxious to speak of his mood to some one.

"Nikita!" said he.

"It is nice and warm," came from below.

"You see, brother! I came near perishing. You would have frozen here and I too. . . ."

Again his muscles twitched, again his eyes filled with tears, and he could not continue. "That does not matter," thought he. "I know what I know—" and was silent.

Several times he looked at the horse and saw that his back was uncovered and that the cloth and the breeching were dragging in the snow; he would gladly have risen and have covered up the horse, but he could not make up his mind to leave Nikita and to disturb

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that state of joyfulness in which he had surprised himself. At this hour he felt no fear.

His body was warm, covered with his pelisse on top and having Nikita beneath him; only his hands, with which he had to hold the edges of the pelisse, were beginning to freeze. He did not think of them, however, but only of how he could revive the *moujik* who was under him.

"He shall not escape me now," said he to himself, in the same proud tone in which he had spoken of his business, his trading.

Vassili Andréitch lay thus some time. At first through his mind passed the impression of the storm, of the breechings and the horse under the camber, and he thought of Nikita beneath him; then came memories of the *fetc*, his wife, the police officials, the drawer with the tapers, and again thoughts of Nikita. Then in his imagination he saw *moujiks*, buying and selling, the white walls and houses with iron roofs; then all was confused, and

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merged like the colors of a rainbow into one single white light, all these thoughts united into one nothing—and he fell asleep. He slept for a long time without dreaming, but before the break of day the dreams returned. It seemed to him as if he were standing at the taper drawer, and the wife of Tichonov was asking him for one for five copecks, as if he wanted to give her the taper and could not move his hands, because they were thrust into his pockets. In his dreams he wanted to go around the shop, but he could not move his legs; his new, clean galoches had adhered to the stone floor, and he could not get his feet out of them. Suddenly the drawer was converted into a bed and Vassili Andréitch saw himself lying upon his stomach on the taper drawer at home. He was lying in the bed and could not rise, and yet he must, for Ivan Matweisch, the police official, would soon be there to treat with him about a small grove, or else he had to put the harness in

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place on Monkharty's back. And he asked his wife: "Well! has he arrived?" "No," said she, "he has not arrived yet." And he heard some one draw up at the perron. "That must be he." . . . No, they passed by. "Nicolavna, Nicolavna! Well, has he not come?" "No." He lay upon the bed unable to rise, and waited and waited; this waiting is at once both anxious and enjoyable. Suddenly he was rejoiced, for he whom he had expected had come, but it was not Ivan Matweisch, the commissioner, but some one else, and yet one for whom he was locking. He came and called him, and he was the same one who called him and bade him lie down with Nikita. And Vassili Andréitch was pleased that the other had come in search of him. "I am coming!" he cried joyfully, and this cry awoke him.

He awoke very different from what he was when he fell asleep. He wanted to rise, but he could not; he wanted to move his hand,

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but he could not, his foot, and he could not either. He wanted to move his head, and that he could not turn. He was surprised, but not grieved. He comprehended that it was death, but this did not trouble him. He recalled the fact that Nikita was lying beneath him, and that he was alive. He thought Nikita was he, and he himself was Nikita, and that his life was in Nikita and not in him. He listened and could hear Nikita breathing. "Nikita is alive, therefore I am alive too!" said he to himself triumphantly. And a new sensation stole over him, such a one as he had never known in his life.

And he bethought himself of his money, his shop, his house, his purchases and his sales, of Mironov's millions, and he could not comprehend why the man whom they called Vassili Brekhounov busied himself with all that.

"Well—he did not know . . ." thought he of Vassili Andréitch Brekhounov. "What

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he did not know, I know, I know it now unmistakably. *Now I know it.*"

And again he heard the call of him who had already called him. "I am coming, I am coming!" replied his entire being with joyous delight.

And he felt that he was free and that nothing more could detain him.

And Vassili Andréitch saw and heard nothing more and felt nothing more in this world.

Around the sleigh, the storm was still raging. The same snowflakes covered with their white dust the pelisse of the dead Vassili Andréitch, Monkharty, quivering in every nerve, and the sleigh which was scarcely visible, and, in the very bottom, Nikita reanimated, beneath the inert form of his master.

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CHAPTER X.

BEFORE dawn, Nikita was awakened by the sense of chilliness, beginning in his back. He had dreamed that he was returning from the mill with a wagon load of flour, and that at Liapino he had stuck in the snow on the bridge. And he saw himself creep under the wagon and seek to raise it. But, strange to say! the wagon would not move and seemed glued to his back, he could neither raise it nor creep out from beneath it; his ribs were crushed. And how cold he was! He must get out. "Enough, now!" said he to some one, who was pressing the wagon down upon his back. "Take out the sacks!—" but the wagon grew colder and colder, it pressed more and more heavily upon him, when suddenly a peculiar noise awoke him, and he un-

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derstood all that had happened. The cold wagon was his dead, frozen master, who was lying upon him. The noise was made by the bay, which had struck the sleigh twice with his shoes.

"Vassili Andréitch, Vassili Andréitch!" cried he, suspecting the truth and carefully trying to slip out from under his master.

But Andréitch did not answer him, his stomach and his legs were rigid and cold, and the body weighed heavily upon him.

"He is probably dead. May the kingdom of heaven be open unto him!" thought Nikita.

He turned his head, shook the snow off him with his hand and opened his eyes. It was light. The wind was still whistling, and it was snowing, only with the difference that the snow no longer rattled against the sleigh, but was covering noiselessly the vehicle and the horse, covering them more and more, and he could no longer hear the horse's breathing or his movements.

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He is frozen, too," thought Nikita. And indeed, the blows from the animal's hoofs against the sleigh, which had aroused Nikita, were the last efforts of the frozen beast to maintain his upright position.

"God, my Father, dost Thou call me likewise?" said Nikita. "It is Thy holy will, and yet it is hard. Well, we all have to die once, and death can not be escaped. But—quickly—!" He again covered up his hand, and closed his eyes in the firm conviction that he would now die.

At noon on the following day the *moujiks* with shovels dug out Vassili Andréitch and Nikita, about a hundred yards from the road, and a demi-kilometre from the village.

The snow had completely covered the sleigh, but the shafts and the scarf were still visible. The bay was standing in the snow up to his stomach; the breeching and the canvas had blown off his back; he was perfectly white and his head leaned against his

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frozen throat; icicles hung upon his nostrils, his eyes seemed to have tears frozen in them. In this one night he had grown so thin, that all that remained of him was skin and bones. Vassili Andréitch lay there like a frozen head of cattle, and they took him off Nikita without his limbs leaving the position they had been in. His protruding bird-of-prey eyes, his open mouth beneath his bristly mustache, were full of snow. Nikita was still alive, but half frozen. When they awoke him he was convinced that he was already dead, and that what was occurring, was occurring not on this earth, but in the other world. But when he heard the cries of the *moujiks* who relieved him of the snow and of Vassili Andréitch's body, he was very much surprised to hear *moujiks* cry out in the other world. Finally he realized that he was still on this earth, and he was more grieved than rejoiced, especially when he felt that the toes on both of his feet were frozen.

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Nikita spent two months in the hospital. Three of his toes were amputated, the rest healed, so he could still work. He lived for twenty years, at first as a servant, later on, in his old age, as a guard. He died only this year, in his home as he desired, under the icons and with a burning taper in his hand. Before his death he asked his wife's forgiveness and pardoned the cooper, bade farewell to his son and grandsons, and died really satisfied at having relieved his son and his daughter-in-law of the care of him; he finally passed from this life, of which he had had enough, to another, which every year and every hour he had found more dear and more enticing. Did he fare there—where he awoke after death—better or worse? Was he disappointed, or did he find there what he had expected?—We shall all learn soon.

THE END.

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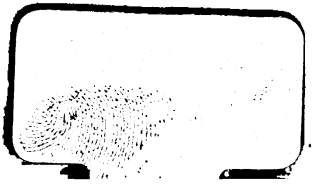

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